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ABSTRACT

The Carnegie Foundation commissioned a collection of essays as part of the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID). Essays and essayists represent six disciplines that are part of the CID: chemistry, education, English, history, mathematics, and neuroscience. Intended to engender conversation about the conceptual foundation of doctoral education, the essays are intended as a starting point and not the last word in disciplinary discussions. This essay begins by suggesting that, though there is far less consensus about the nature and identity of English as a field of study than there was 40 years ago, English graduate programs still fail to confront the contested nature of "the profession" directly, leaving their graduate students to figure things out on their own. The essay offers seven proposals, intended as provocations rather than dogmatic prescriptions, to make these contested issues a central focus of doctoral programs, thereby making the process of socialization into professional culture more open and less mystifying. The proposals also are intended to take advantage of those areas of consensus that have been there all along, particularly the commitment to teaching and writing. (Contains 17 references.) (EV)

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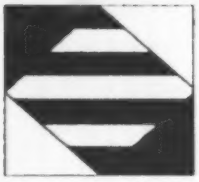
CARNEGIE ESSAYS ON THE DOCTORATE

ENGLISH



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THE PH.D. IN ENGLISH: TOWARDS A NEW CONSENSUS

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I got my Ph.D. in English and American literature in 1963 at Stanford University, where I had begun doctoral studies in 1959. Though I was a successful graduate student, it was only after many years as a professor that I started to feel comfortable in "the profession," as it was and is called by insiders. In fact, phrases like "the profession," "research," and "the field," always left me feeling confused and inadequate when tossed off by my professors and fellow graduate students. The meanings of these terms had not been explained to me as an undergraduate (though I had majored in English at a leading college, the University of Chicago), and once I got to graduate school, the fear of looking like the greenhorn I was prevented me from asking for clarification. That's how I remember graduate school, as a place where, if you were any good, you supposedly already knew what the game was and why it was being played. If you didn't, why were you there?

Though the mental landscape of graduate study has changed utterly in the forty years since I left Stanford, students tell me they still experience the kind of confusion and intimidation I felt in the face of "the profession" and the pressure to appear knowledgeable (or knowing) about its mysteries. If anything, the new theories, texts, and subjects that have opened the field and exploded the once narrowly constricted boundaries of "English" have made the field (the very word now sounds vaguely quaint) even harder to get one's mind around and to locate oneself in with any security. The crises and upheavals English studies have been through now force graduate students to grow up faster and become more savvy and professional than my graduate generation had to do, while the pressures have been vastly intensified by anxieties I never had to feel about whether any job security would lie at the end of the arduous process.

Both my research and my personal experience have led me to think and write about how English studies can better meet the unprecedented challenge of an academic and social world far more diverse and openly conflicted than the world in which those studies originated but which many of their practices still anachronistically assume. The paradigm-shattering and boundary-crossing that have come to typify literary studies (one of the many collections that attempt to chart the new situation is entitled *Redrawing the Boundaries*) have changed the English doctoral program from a relatively stable institution with pre-established rules and conventions to which students conformed to a do-it-yourself kit that depends for its shape on each student's particular interests and creative initiative. The old apprenticeship system—you attached yourself to a senior professor who assigned you a topic and told you what to do—has broken down without being replaced by any comparable guidance apparatus. This new open-endedness makes doctoral study more free-ranging and exciting but more stressful and anxiety-producing, or stressful and anxiety-producing in new ways, like moving from a white collar job to a high-wire act at the circus. Contrary to some critics, I believe that on balance this change has been for the better, but I also believe that the English doctorate needs to be rethought from the ground up.

In her memoir, *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned*, Jane Tompkins, who was in the English Ph.D. program at Yale about the same time I was at Stanford, writes as follows about the absence of genuine intellectual community in the program: "At Yale, though there was much else, there was no intellectual debate to speak of, in the sense of ongoing discussion of contested issues. Scholars had vendettas against other scholars but there were no critical debates that cut across the periods and specialties to rouse our spirits" (81). My experience at Stanford was very much like what Tompkins describes at Yale. Though "contested issues" abounded in the

Stanford English department and the field at large, these issues were never debated in public. As in Tompkins' case at Yale, the disagreements expressed themselves as "vendettas" that students caught glimpses of through gossip or the ironic asides by which one professor adverted to another in class references that were usually decodable only by the few among us who (wink, wink, nudge, nudge) were in the know.

At Stanford, a frequent target of these coded references was my eventual dissertation director, the poet-critic Yvor Winters, one of the most embattled figures in American letters at the time. Winters had published a series of stringently (his detractors said stridently) polemical books and essays in which he called into question the reputations of many of the most revered names, living and dead, of the literary and critical canon: Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and virtually the entire British romantic movement; Emerson, Whitman, T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, John Crowe Ransom, and most of twentieth century modernism.[1] Not surprisingly, Winters' ideas split the department into pro-Yvor and anti-Yvor factions. I became a committed Wintersian and more or less remained one for the first ten years of my career. I found myself constantly arguing about Winters' ideas with fellow graduate students and sometimes other professors, arguments that I look back on as the most intense, intellectually exciting, and educationally valuable moments of my graduate education. But since these discussions took place only occasionally and in private, they did not satisfy my hunger for intellectual engagement and community. Nor did they help me as much as they might have to make sense of the intellectual territory and thereby mature more quickly as an academic.

In fact, the most intense intellectual community I experienced came from the campus protests and teach-ins that erupted during the mid-60s in response to the Vietnam War. The upheavals of the sixties were one of the major forces that would democratize English studies and thereby explode its traditional coherence. Looking back, I think my experience of the debates of the sixties helped me far more to mature as an academic intellectual than anything I studied in graduate school.

I experienced graduate school not as an intellectual community that sharpened my thinking about important issues, but as a set of disconnected courses and mixed messages. I coped by giving each professor what he or she seemed to want, even when it contradicted what the professor the previous hour had wanted. In my courses in the romantic period, for example, I suppressed or soft-pedaled the Wintersian hostility to the romantics that I freely vented in Winters' courses or those taught by sympathetic colleagues. This experience of going along with the premises of each course in order to please (or appease) the instructor was not without value. It forced me to try on provisionally different intellectual universes and see what it felt like to live inside them, and it made me work to create my own overviews, connecting the dots myself instead of waiting for someone to hand me an authorized map. Often, however, my exposure to views that never came together left me suspended with respect to their relationship. The points of disagreement were easy to identify when it came to Winters and his romanticist and modernist colleagues, but in other cases where the alliances or oppositions were harder to project I could only guess whether views were compatible or incompatible. In the end, I internalized the compartmentalizations of the curriculum rather than wrestled with its conflicts, either resolving the conflicts too easily on one side—usually that of Winters, who did claim to

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[1] For Winters' central formulations, see his 1947 *In Defense of Reason*.

give you an authoritative map—or ignoring them. After all, if the department itself did not care enough about its contested issues to face up to them in public, then why should I?

I came to understand later when I studied the institutional history of academic literary studies that the curricular mixed-messages to which I was exposed had been the result of the system of negotiated compromises that modern educators had evolved to avoid having to confront and (heaven forbid!) debate their disagreements in public view. Under this system, which had grown up in the climate of expansion and affluence that universities had enjoyed for most of the twentieth century, intellectual turf wars could be neutralized by the simple device of adding a new component in order to appease the feuding parties and preserve peaceful coexistence. Whenever a threatening innovation arose—interpretive criticism, creative writing, feminist criticism, ethnic studies, deconstructionism, queer theory, and so forth—the new challengers could be absorbed by adding a new position, course, program, department, or suite of offices. This was a tactic that pacified both the young Turks, who could now do their subversive work in their corner of the curriculum, and the old fogeys, who could go on doing what they had always done in theirs. All factions were kept moderately satisfied, since their various agendas were being covered or at least represented, and rivals were safely sealed off from each other so that they could tune one another out most of the time rather than bicker.[2]

Yet both students and faculty paid an intellectual price for such arrangements, not only in being deprived of the climate of debate scholars need to avoid going brain dead (the deprivation Tompkins complains of in her doctoral years at Yale), but in the confusion and disorientation about "the profession" that results from curricular mixed messages. And the degree of confusion and disorientation I experienced forty years ago from the mixed-message curriculum at Stanford can be multiplied several times over for students in the wake of the diversification and dissensus of the post-sixties. My graduate students today are exposed to a far more intimidating clash of mixed messages—along with a heightened degree of anger and frustration over the disagreements—than was I in relatively quieter times.

As a graduate student you generally occupy a position of double insecurity, since you no longer belong to the undergraduate culture but you aren't yet accepted into the faculty culture. As an apprentice faculty member, you are more dependent on the judgment of your professors than you were as an undergraduate, when you could dismiss a bad grade or a severe evaluation on the grounds that you didn't necessarily hope to become the kind of person your mentor was. These inevitable insecurities are further deepened when what it means to be part of "the profession" is left unexplained and up to the graduate student to puzzle out on his or her own. These insecurities—and the lack of guidance and opportunities for discussion that make them worse—often come to a head when the graduate student first begins to teach. In my case, the first experience of teaching was one of deep excitement tempered by fear of being exposed as a fraud. I "learned to teach" by fakery, pretending that I knew what I was doing and keeping the pretense up until at some point, after many years, it stopped feeling like one.

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[2] For more extended discussions of this add-on method of department building and its consequent evasion of conflict, see Gerald Graff's 1987 *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*, pp. 8ff and passim; and 1992 *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education*, pp. 125-43.

When I began to teach my own courses, first as a teaching assistant at Stanford (1961-62), then as an assistant professor at the University of New Mexico (1963-66) and Northwestern University (1966-70), I felt that I was still mentally an undergraduate in many ways who was hoping to fool students into confusing me with a real professor. Fortunately for me, the same forms of academic mystification that left me in the dark as a doctoral student lead undergraduates to believe that all college instructors know everything and must be trusted as authorities until they prove otherwise. I would have been grateful for an opportunity to discuss these feelings and the other challenges of teaching with a faculty member or a more experienced graduate student, but except for the weekly staff meetings about the freshman course—a combination of composition and introduction to literature—there was no structured discussion of teaching. In these staff meetings, what passed for a discussion of how to teach tended to be an analysis of the text to be taught, of Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" or Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken."

That is, what discourse there was about teaching took the form of an exposition of interesting things an instructor could say—or try to get students to say—about a literary work. The psychology and sociology of one's particular students—who they were, what their past experiences were, and what assumptions they had about studying literature or being part of an intellectual culture—didn't figure in the discussion. Nor did the psychology and sociology of the instructors themselves—who were we, and why were we doing this? When my classroom was observed by a professor in the "visitation" I was required to have as a teaching assistant (and again until I became a tenured professor, after which it was evidently assumed that nothing could be done about me), the only suggestions the professor offered was that I close the door to my classroom and speak a little louder.

Clearly, questions of teaching were not considered to be intellectually interesting the way, say, the structure of a metaphysical lyric or revolutions in the history of ideas were interesting. This was odd in a way, since informally faculty members and graduate students spoke of how their teaching helped them work out the ideas that went into their scholarly and critical writing. The assumption that your dissertation, suitably translated for undergraduates, would have some payoff in your undergraduate teaching was a standard one in job interviews. Some scholars even claimed that being forced to explain their ideas to freshmen had a healthy influence on their published writing. And in an era when consensus on principles and methods was breaking down, the commitment to teaching could have provided a countervailing sense of common ground. Yet finally, teaching, unlike scholarship, was not seen as "intellectual work"—something that, as Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori and Patricia Donahue rightly argue, should be seen as an activity "that can be theorized, work whose parameters and conditions of possibility can be analyzed and evaluated in accordance with formally articulated standards. . . ." (84).

Though I absorbed this condescending attitude toward teaching, it may have been the experience of classroom failure that jarred me out of it. As early as my first teaching experiences I was struck by a classroom dynamic that would become familiar to me over the years. The students early on sorted themselves into two distinct groups. The high achieving insider few usually sat in the front rows, carried the class discussions, and comported themselves like would-be professors, or at least people who wanted to talk and were beginning to talk the same kind of analytic and argumentative talk I did. The more or less silent majority sat in the back, fearful of being called on, seemingly disengaged, either unable to play the language game of

literary analysis (an obsessive search for "hidden meaning" that they complained of as "overanalyzing") or unsure why it was played at all. In my experience, this two-tiered student pattern has remained intact even as the methodologies, theories, approaches to literature, and the canon of literature itself have exploded and proliferated after the late 1960s, as I described earlier. If "English" has become an elusive subject for graduate students in the wake of these developments, one can only imagine how much more elusive it has become for undergraduates.

The split between literature and composition has made this elusive subject—English—even more mystifying. As a new teacher, I noticed that the struggling students seem to tie themselves in knots trying to mimic the unfamiliar moves of critical argument, and I increasingly came to feel that there is something frivolous about trying to teach undergraduates to write *literary* argument when, except for the insider few, they needed more guidance on writing argument about any subject. These students needed more work in basic composition before moving to literary criticism, the special conventions of which tend to befuddle students for whom the conventions of public discourse itself are new and intimidating enough. But the status and incentives that had long elevated literature over composition made it unlikely that they would get the basic composition work they needed.

When I began teaching in 1963, professors of English were still expected to teach composition and did so, however unenthusiastically. But in order to cope with the increased enrollments of the expanding university, English departments increasingly shifted in burden (as it was seen) of teaching composition to graduate teaching assistants. By the early 70s, it was common for interviewers at the MLA convention to assure candidates that if they got the job, they would not have to teach comp—or not much of it—but would immediately teach mostly literature courses. The assumption was that ambitious young graduate students and instructors wanted to be free from the albatross of teaching composition as soon as possible.

One might have expected a different kind of thinking to prevail, since the late 1960s was a period in which the problem of student writing—which had been seen as chronic since the founding of departments of English—was making one of its periodic reappearances in public attention. But the late 60s was a period of "sink or swim" thinking about chronic educational problems. The high schools, it was said, were the proper place for students to learn to read and write; if college students were showing up with deficiencies in these areas, it was not the responsibility of the college to do something about the problem. With status and enrollment pressures going in the opposite direction, it was not a promising time to expect a recommitment by faculties to teach basic expository writing. Mina Shaughnessy made a stir with her 1977 book *Errors and Expectations*, a study of the problems minority students encountered in basic composition courses, but by that time, composition was so marginalized in programs taught by underpaid and overworked graduate students and adjunct faculty that these problems were not taken seriously or addressed in a bold way. Today the disconnection between "comp" and "lit" has become progressively more severe and more deeply institutionalized, even though the newest intellectual trends in the field exalt the importance of rhetoric and reject the sharp antithesis the New Critics had drawn between literary and non-literary discourse. Here again—as with the commitment to teaching—a potential area of common ground went unnoticed: the common commitment to argumentative writing.

In a book entitled *What is English?* that reported on the 1987 English Coalition Conference (which included high school as well as college teachers), the compositionist Peter Elbow

virtually concluded that the question posed by his title was unanswerable: "This book," he wrote, "is trying to paint a picture of a profession that cannot define what it is"(v). The observation was hardly unprecedented, for the identity of English has always been notoriously shaky. As early as 1911, one educator had observed that "even the general prescription of English is an agreement in name only; what actually goes under this name is so diverse as to show that we have not yet discovered an 'essential' course in English" (Graff, *Professing Literature*, 100). Also in *Professing Literature*, I show that there is something mythical about the notion of a golden age of yore in which consensus reigned on the nature of English and the humanities (1-14 and passim). Nevertheless, though earlier generations may have been unable to formulate the unifying principles of English, until around the mid-sixties there was still a vast amount of unspoken common ground about what constituted literature, which literature was worth studying and how it should be studied and by whom, and this common ground provided a relatively stable background against which disagreements were played out. "Scholars" might feud with "critics," to mention one of the fiercer civil wars that intersected my graduate study, but at the end of the day, one imagines, the parties drank whiskey together and lit up cigars. It is this relatively stable intellectual and social set of background understandings of "the profession" that has come apart since the late sixties.

Stephen North captures the post-sixties situation well in *Refiguring the Ph.D. in English Studies*, a recent study of the English doctoral program. North observes that under the new dissensus, departments were hard pressed to determine what graduate students in English should cover in their studies. Indeed, departments "found themselves having to decide again and again what it meant to 'cover the field' when, on the one hand, that field—conceived in terms of both the constituent areas of expertise *and* the bodies of those who populated it—had diversified beyond anyone's experience." Moreover with the economic recession of the early 1970s, "the resources available for carrying out any such coverage either remained the same or became scarcer"(59). North quotes *The Future of Doctoral Study in English*, the official proceedings of the 1987 Conference of Graduate Study and the Future of Doctoral Study in English in Wayzata, Minnesota, whose editors conclude that "[N]o unanimity on any significant issue emerged during the conference," where the participants could agree only that "neither 'historical coverage' nor 'canonical unity' could 'guide our conceptualization of curricula. As a consequence,' they conclude, 'there was little certainty about what our graduate students should know both as developing scholars and as apprentice teachers'" (63).

North gets at the heart of the matter when he observes that the new dissensus "rendered peaceful coexistence by compartmentalization increasingly untenable." His hypothetical scenario helps us see the problem in concrete terms:

> When a department's Miltonist/eighteenth century person/Emersonian/director of first-year composition retired, should it hire another Miltonist, etc., or a deconstructionist, a fiction writer, a scholar in African American literature, someone expert in computers and writing, a postcolonialist, etcetera, etcetera? Both this decision making process and the subsequent search came to be further complicated by demographic (not to mention ethical and legal) considerations: man or woman? Ivy League, land grant university, or smaller niche program? U. S. citizen or not? White, Hispanic, African American, Asian American, Native American? (58-59)

As North points out, there is no clear way to compromise in such decisions, especially when diminishing funds take away the traditional pluralist option of appeasing all groups by hiring one of each.

North cites my own analysis, which I summarized earlier, of how the old additive method of avoiding conflicts lost its usefulness once the conflicts of English became too frequent and disruptive, and the financial resources for creating new space by expanding the playing field had dried up. Until the seventies, departments had been able to preserve peaceful coexistence in the face of deepening conflicts by simply adding new components to the aggregate and keeping the warring parties in separate courses or programs where they wouldn't be at each other's throats. Now this expensive option was disappearing and deepening the problem further were the intensifying culture wars in and about education that had been festering since the antiwar protests of the 60s. They broke out in a spate of conservative attacks in the 1980s and 1990s on higher education and especially on the alleged political correctness of literary studies. It was much harder to prevent the conflicts of literary studies from erupting into public view now that these conflicts were in the news every day and were described in the latest best-selling book alleging that politically correct terrorists were silencing dissent in classrooms and faculty meetings.

I began this essay by suggesting that, though there is far less consensus about the nature and identity of English as a field of study than there was when I began my doctoral work more than forty years ago, English graduate programs still fail to confront the contested nature of "the profession" directly, leaving their graduate students to figure things out on their own. I offer the following seven proposals - provocations rather than dogmatic prescriptions - to make these contested issues a central focus of doctoral programs, thereby making the process of socialization into professional culture more open and less mystifying. These proposals also take advantage of those areas of consensus that have been there all along, particularly the commitment to teaching and writing.

SEVEN PROPOSALS

1. Organize introductory graduate courses around contested issues

Virtually all English departments have recognized that the old "Bibliography and Methods" course of the kind I took at Stanford, with its assumption of consensus and of fixed and well-defined foundations of scholarship, criticism, and the literary canon no longer reflects—if it ever did—the way intellectual work in the field is done. Not all departments have evolved more suitable introductory courses, however, and some have evaded the problem by having no general introductory course at all. Yet it is important to help graduate students get access more directly to the shifting disagreements—and agreements—that represent the necessary background of working knowledge for getting their bearings in English studies.

The most direct way for English doctoral programs to accomplish this goal is to establish required, preferably year-long, introductory courses that survey major debates, past and present, in the field. Such courses might start with broad questions like "What is English?"; "Is English a discipline, and, if so, in what sense?"; and "How are English studies related to other disciplines and to students' lives?" They might then move on to other questions, like the following:

- Why read literature? What is the difference between reading for pleasure and reading analytically for complex meanings?
- How do we resolve the conflict or tension between respecting the work itself on its own terms and contextualizing or appropriating the text for various moral, social, personal, pedagogical, or other purposes?
- What are the differences between the new and old ways of historicizing literature?
- Are literature and literary studies inevitably "political?" In what sense? If so, what then?
- How did the publish-or-perish system evolve? What is its rationale? What objections have been made to it? What, if anything, should be done about it?

As Stephen North argues (he wrongly imagines he differs from me on this issue), graduate students need to be active participants in these debates, not spectators, even if—especially if—they question the terms of the debate or wish to change the subject. The course needs to be open, that is, to questions like "Why are we arguing about this issue as opposed to that one?" or "Why should we care?"

Such courses must not duck the questions that make us most uncomfortable and therefore most need airing, such as the bitterly contested question of graduate student unions. My own view, for example, is that graduate teaching is obviously work and needs to be recognized as such. I am not persuaded by the argument that extending collective bargaining and other union rights to graduate students would weaken the bond of trust between student and mentor. If anything, that bond is now most seriously threatened by the feelings of exploitation teaching assistants often experience. There are arguments on the other side, however, some coming from graduate students themselves, and they need to be openly and frankly joined.

Contested issues courses could make use of visiting speakers who bring viewpoints from outside the department or that are not represented by the local faculty. Most departments have a modest budget for visiting speakers, but visiting talks tend to be underused pedagogically, usually being extracurricular add-ons that compete with course work and other parts of the program. Yet with a bit of planning, they could be integrated into courses and used to knit the curriculum together. Several years ago, I took part in an exemplary visiting speakers' series at Miami University of Ohio that served as the basis of a course. When I arrived, the students had read, discussed, and written papers on my work and compared my approach with those of other speakers in the series. The challenging questions and criticisms they raised made for an unusually intense and focused discussion that felt more satisfying that the usual post-lecture Q and A. I was so impressed with the Miami course as a model for introductory courses that I borrowed from it when I became director of the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities at the University of Chicago.[3] Other English departments that organize central graduate courses

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[3] For an account of this program's "contested-issues" introductory course, see Jenny Adams, "Jumping Into the Culture Wars."

around contested issues include ones at the State University of New York at Albany and Illinois State University.[4]

2. Establish required courses and workshops on teaching

If it is important to recognize that there is no consensus in English studies on many fundamental issues, it is also important to recognize the two major areas in which there is considerable agreement—the central place of teaching and writing. Teaching is the common enterprise of academic English scholars, and it needs to be treated as the intellectually challenging topic it is with its own important controversies. Future English teachers need to be exposed, for example, to debates between New Critical and more contextually oriented pedagogies, as well as to debates between contrasting teaching styles:

- lecturing vs. discussing
- the pros and cons of breaking the class into small groups (an issue which mirrors larger questions about authority and individualism)
- the pros and cons of politically committed pedagogy
- liberal vs. vocational justifications for teaching English
- the tensions between composition and literature teaching and the arguments for and against bridging the gap
- the erotics of the classroom, including the kinds of rules or codes, if any, that should regulate romantic or sexual relations between teachers and students

3. Bring the regular faculty back into freshman composition

Just as courses on teaching would recognize that teaching is part of the common ground of the discipline, bringing members of the regular faculty back into the teaching of composition would recognize that persuasive argument is also part of that common ground. If professors are expected to write and publish, it is reasonable to ask them to reflect on writing issues, to take those issues seriously as intellectual work, and to share their views on those issues with students. Indeed, since many professors have interesting things to say about writing, to exclude them from teaching the subject is perverse. On the other hand, assigning professors to teach composition courses is not necessarily the most productive (or cost-effective) use of their time and talents. An alternative would be to identify those professors—not just in the English department or even the humanities, but across all the departments—who have the best ideas on writing and are willing to share them, and then institute a large lecture supplement to freshman composition in which these professors would interact with each other and graduate teaching assistants. The English department at my university plans to experiment with such a supplementary lecture next year.

Departments should also institute a regular writing workshop in which faculty members and graduate students present work in progress for discussion by the group. Students beginning their dissertation proposals would submit them for discussion at this workshop.

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[4] On the Albany program, see North, *Refiguring the Ph.D.*, pp. 87ff. On the program at Illinois State, see Bob Broad et al., "Renewing the Nexus: Strengthening Connections across the English Education Program."

The main point should be to move beyond seeing writing and the teaching of writing as burdens that distract professionals from the "real" work of content—research. Though it might not seem surprising to encounter this crude form of content-separation in the sciences, its persistence seems extremely odd in English, where, since the rise of the New Criticism, a virtually unchallenged premise has been that in any complex communication form and content are inextricably linked. To recognize that reflecting on and teaching writing is not a burdensome add-on to the work of English scholars but a central part of that work would be simply to honor the principle that has guided the discipline for the last fifty years.

4. Link graduate study with undergraduate research

Traditionally, the consensus has been that undergraduate and graduate study in the humanities should be kept sharply separate. At its most reasonable, this recognizes that most undergraduates do not aspire to become academics. But one of its unfortunate byproducts is an extreme and educationally crippling isolation of undergraduates from the research interests of faculty members and graduate students. Undergraduates end up being sheltered not only from the work their faculty and graduate instructors care most passionately about, but from the core conversations of the discipline, which is to say, from the discipline itself. The result is the wide gulf that I first noticed as a teaching assistant at Stanford between the vast struggling majority of students in my courses and the small high-achieving minority. In the process of being protected from professionalization, undergraduates are kept in the dark—as I had been as a college student—about the nature of the discipline they are studying.

In literary studies (and the humanities generally), the most glaring symptom of this withholding of secrets from students is the habit of assigning only primary texts in undergraduate courses, with little or no literary criticism (much less literary theory). The bizarre consequence of this practice is that undergraduates are denied access to the critical discourse they are expected to produce in course papers and class discussion and then penalized at grading time for producing it badly. If "taking literature" means writing critical essays about poems and novels rather than (or in addition to) writing poems and novels, then students need to read some samples of the discourse they are supposed to write. It makes sense for some of those samples to be drawn from the most provocative and accessible academic research.

A promising countertrend in today's university is the growth of undergraduate research programs, which make undergraduates co-participants with faculty members and graduate students in advanced research, thereby closing the traditional gap between undergraduate and graduate students. Having been involved myself in a college undergraduate research program at my university, I am pleasantly struck by the way bringing undergraduates into advanced research dissolves the traditional alienation of students by making students and instructors part of the same team devoted to common intellectual objectives. To date, however, the sciences have been far more aggressive in developing undergraduate research programs than have the humanities, and even in the sciences such programs tend to be set aside only for graduate school-bound honors students. There should be ways by which English departments can bring their majors and even their general education students into the most interesting research conversations of the discipline without narrowing their perspectives or prematurely imposing professional models on them. Some will object that this is a prescription for dumbing down faculty research, and this might be a danger in some cases. Arguably, however, faculty members and graduate students would themselves write more accessibly and with an eye to

broader contexts if they were challenged to explain themselves to undergraduate students. In this and other respects, the potential benefits of undergraduate research are as great for researchers as for undergraduates.

5. Bring creative writing into the departmental conversation

Creative writing programs too often form a kind of ghetto, a place for students to escape "overanalyzing" and boring scholarship and for creative writing faculty to screen themselves from literary theorists and postcolonialists. As D. G. Myers points out in his history, *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, "in the hallways of the English department, exchanges between poets and scholars are marked by mutual hostility. The poets complain that literary study has 'no point of contact with the concerns of most working poets'; the scholars dismiss creative writing as 'pseudo-literature' "(4-5). As Myers observes, this isolation "is a far cry from what the founders of creative writing envisioned" before World War II, when creative writing programs were established in the hope of bridging the gap between academic literary study and contemporary creative practice (4-5).

Such isolation obviously prevents the emergence of a fruitful exchange between the creative and the scholarly halves of the faculty brain. Departments should establish courses in which creative writing instructors and students engage with literary critics and compositionists. Just as proposal three would build a bridge between the literature and the composition programs, this one would build one between creative writing and literary study on the one hand and expository writing on the other. "Creative Writing," "Scholarship," and "Theory" could well be a major unit in the "Contested Issues" introductory courses I propose above. Such a unit could explore the numerous points of intersection and overlap as well as of tension and conflict among scholars, theorists, and creative writers, perhaps by focusing on texts that blur genre distinctions such as Jorge Luis Borges' *Labyrinths*, Roland Barthes' *S/Z*, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, and others.

6. Establish joint programs with colleges of education for high school teachers

The disciplines' scandalous neglect of (and condescension toward) the schools has long been widely recognized and deplored. Hoping to reverse this trend, the Modern Language Association in 1999 published a collection of essays surveying university English teacher education programs, *Preparing a Nation's Teachers: Models for English and Foreign Language Programs*. English departments that lack sufficient social conscience (or sense of shame) to take seriously their responsibility to train schoolteachers may begin having their hand forced by economic necessity, as the demand for high school teachers remains far in excess of that for college professors. The wall of isolation must be breached that has prevented us from exploring the potential common ground between the research and pedagogical aims of English doctoral programs and of English teacher education programs in Colleges of Education.

A relatively simple way to begin creating such common ground would be to offer jointly-taught courses by faculty of English and education. The courses and workshops on teaching that I propose above would be obvious candidates for such joint teaching, but so would other kinds of courses. Also of value would be versions of the same course taught in colleges and high schools by professors, graduate students, and high school teachers working together. This practice of

learning by teaching together figures to be more effective than staff development workshops in which professors and high school teachers talk about pedagogy.[5]

7. Establish alternatives for nonacademic employment

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, led by Robert Weisbuch, has led a national movement to encourage graduate programs to open alternative career tracks for doctorate holders especially in the humanities.[6] These efforts come up against resistance, since they challenge the traditional sense view that a Ph.D. is wasted unless it is crowned by a college teaching position (if God wanted English Ph.D. holders to go to work in advertising, why did He make us hate making money?).

When the University of Chicago inaugurated its Master of Arts Program in the Humanities in 1995, it formed a working partnership with the university's office of Career Planning and Placement, and secured internship agreements from several local alumni businesses. These steps were virtually unheard of for graduate programs in the humanities at the time. As it happened, about half our students (in classes of seventy to over a hundred per year) chose to pursue academic tracks while half set their sights on jobs in corporations, publishing, galleries, museums, public relations, and other nonacademic areas. Employers proved to be surprisingly receptive to the idea that graduate work in the humanities is excellent preparation for a wide range of jobs outside academia—but perhaps not so surprisingly, seeing that the importance of critical thinking skills is widely recognized by the corporate world.[7]

It is tempting to be cynical about such ideas and make charges of "selling out" and "co-optation." But there has always been something affected and unhealthy about the pretense that the humanities are superior to the crass and fallen world of getting and spending, whether that pretense took the form of old fashioned mandarinism or new-fangled transgressiveness. After all, co-optation can cut both ways: when the corporate world absorbs humanities graduates it is true that the graduates can be corporatized, but it is also true that the corporate world can be humanized.

CONCLUSION

Given the resistance to institutional change that has characterized English departments (like most academic disciplines), even if one concedes the merits of my seven proposals, one may question the practical likelihood of their being implemented. The notion seems especially improbable that faculty traditionalists and avant-gardists, scholars, theorists, creative writers, compositionists, and partisans of other rival approaches, methods, and assumptions, will ever consent to air their differences for and with students. Yet it is worth noting that members of these groups frequently do engage in open controversy at academic conferences and in the

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[5] For information on such a program, see Gerald Graff, "Working with the Schools."

[6] For information on the Humanities at Work initiative see: http://www.woodrow.org/phd/ and Denise K. Magner,, "Finding New Paths for Ph.D.'s in the Humanities."

[7] On the success of Chicago's MAPH in helping humanities graduate students find nonacademic employment, see Jenny Adams "Jumping Into the Culture Wars," and Allison Schneider, "Master's Degrees, Once Scorned, Attract Students and General Revenue."

pages of professional and general-interest journals. It is only within the curriculum at our home campuses that openly debating differences seems unusual, unseemly, and out of place. Evidently, we have become so accustomed to polite evasion of differences being the norm in local departmental life that we fail to notice that such a state of affairs is actually at odds with the way we do our work. Arguably, courses that dramatize the interplay of rival perspectives on contested issues would better represent the reality of intellectual life in English studies than any set of disconnected offerings can do.

Furthermore, even the proposals that may seem most unrealistic—regular faculty members involving themselves in the teaching of composition, increased interest in the intellectual challenges of pedagogy, and more collaboration between university faculty and high school teachers—have a basis either in already-established practices or in emergent ways of thinking. School-college collaborations have become increasingly common across the country, as educators on both sides of the divide recognize their common ground. And there seems to be growing recognition that a profession that officially claims to value writing and teaching has to be willing to commit itself institutionally to these enterprises. I have argued in this essay that English studies need to be rethought from the ground up, but such a rethinking has already been under way for decades. Ultimately, then, transforming "English" is a matter not of breaking completely from what is, but of giving better institutional expression to what is already envisioned or done.

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